**Minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held 16th September 2024**

 **Present:** Cllr K Phillips (CH), Cllr J Garner, Cllr D Wall, Cllr E Adamson, Mrs T Rhodes (Greenfield & Grasscroft)

**607. Apologies for absence:** Cllrs L Dawson, S Al-Hamdani, H Bishop, M Bingley

**608. Declarations of Interest:** None declared

**609. Minutes from meeting Monday 10th May 2024**

The minutes were accepted as a true record and signed at the meeting by the Chairman.

**610. Matters Arising**

There was some discussion around whether Community groups should be invited to this meeting. It was agreed the Clerk would check the Standing Orders Terms of Reference and feedback to the Committee.

There was some discussion around the timing of this meeting and it was agreed it would meet at 6pm going forward.

**611. Budget Setting 2025-26**

The budget figures had been shared prior to the meeting. Following discussions regarding item 612 and 614 on the agenda, the budget proposal for 2025-2026 was agreed.

**612. Community Toilet Scheme – update**

The Clerk advised the costings received to replace the damaged Community Toilet signposts across the Parish. The cost of producing each sign from Cusacks was £40.43 net, total £363.87. The cost from OMBC Highways for installation was £2198.40 net (some can be fitted to existing posts, but in other locations a new post would need to be sited, hence the increased cost).

Cllr Garner shared the cost of sticker signposts in all locations and it was agreed the Clerk would purchase 12 of the window cling 9” x 9” at a total cost of £117.

It was agreed that the Committee would like the signs to be put up for the two community toilets not actually part of the Parish Council funding scheme, a total of 9 locations.

There was discussion around whether each facility offered disabled access, it would be the ideal, but the smaller venues are not obliged to offer this.

Councillor Adamson to visit each venue and feedback to the Clerk. Those without disabled facilities, will need the symbol removing from the sign prior to installation.

As these costs was not accounted for in the current Environment budget, Councillors asked the Clerk to take this to the next Finance meeting. If Finance Committee approve, the Clerk will make the arrangements. If Finance are unable to agree to this expense in this budget year, it will be added into next year’s budget proposal. Proposed Cllr Adamson, seconded Cllr Garner, carried.

The Clerk advised that the new owner of the Clarence had requested to join the Community toilet scheme. There was some discussion around this and it was agreed that there wasn’t a further requirement in the area at this moment in time.

**613. Update on Grouse Shooting/Rewilding Progress**

Councillors were updated on the progress so far. Following the last meeting the Clerk contacted all stakeholders, the RSPB, United Utilities, and the Upperwood Estate to facilitate meetings with them and representatives of the Parish Council.

Due to pressures of the farming calendar the Upperwood Estate advised they were unable to meet, and we have since extended a further invitation and will continue to try and facilitate a meeting with them to ensure that all stakeholders have had the opportunity to be involved in discussions.

A meeting and site walk was held with United Utilities 12th April and Councillors’ key concerns regarding safe public access were taken on board. The outcome was that UU would write to the estate to clarify the conditions of the agreement and about the laying of feed on land that hadn’t been agreed.

UU also agreed to review and subsequently removed the signage restricting access (apart from when conducting forestry work). UU were also concerned about reports of aggressive behaviour directed to members of the public and advised these incidents should be reported to the police.

The outcome is that no shooting will take place on public land.

A meeting was held 13th May with the RSPB, which was very informative. They expressed concern about shooting taking place on the border of their lease and the safety risks to their visitors.They were concerned about the imbalance of pheasants to other birds which attract vermin and predators which kill other species. There was a demonstrable negative effect on the environment.

Mrs Rhodes expressed concern that peoples’ livelihoods may be affected. Councillors again voiced their wish to understand both sides and were very keen to facilitate a meeting with the Upperwood Estate. After more discussion it was agreed the clerk wrote again to the estate representative, requesting that if they are unable to attend a meeting, would they please share their views by letter or email to the Parish Council.

It was proposed that the Committee, after allowing sufficient time for a response to be received from the Estate management, would draw their enquiry to a conclusion and at the next meeting of the Environment Committee, develop a policy ready to share with full council regarding access and game shooting.

Proposed Cllr Garner, seconded Cllr Adamson, carried.

Cllr Wall to confirm with United Utilities that the action agreed at the meeting has been taken and to request if they are considering any further actions.

**614. Energy survey report**

This report had been shared previously and the recommendations were discussed. It was agreed that some of these recommendations were based on assumptions and we needed to be cautious in implementing any measures.

Cllr Phillips requested councillors read this report fully and report back their recommendations, 2 or 3 ideally, to the clerk within the next 2 weeks. A task and finish group was proposed, attended by Cllr Wall, Mrs Rhodes and the Site Manager to develop an energy policy and to research funding options for LED lights.

It was agreed to continue with the current policy of replacing failed lights with LEDs in the interim.

Staff behaviour was discussed and it was agreed a meeting would be arranged to explain the importance of easy to do energy saving measures across the site. The Site Manager and RFO would lead on this.

Councillors agreed with the Clerk’s proposal to charge additional for heating and lighting for big events.

The Clerk was asked to share this report with the Assets Management Committee, copying in all other Councillors, asking for their ideas and recommendations.

**615. Pollution of the River Tame in Delph– (deferred from last meeting)**

It was noted that this has now been actioned

**616. Update on Tanner’s Mill (deferred from last meeting)**

It was noted that this has now been actioned.

**617. Concern over mature trees and light pollution (email received from MOP)**

This was discussed and it was agreed the Clerk would write to the resident with advice and support.

**618. Support for voluntary litter-picking by residents**

Cllr Wall brought up the great work that voluntary litter pickers are doing across Saddleworth and the challenges faced in disposing of it. There was some discussion around this, possibly using the Civic Hall bins. Mrs Rhodes advised that full bags of litter can be left outside Boarshurst Band Club, or left at the bottom of Wellington Rd and OMBC will collect them by prior arrangement.

 It was agreed Cllr Wall will investigate these options and share at the next meeting.

**619.** **Green Belt audit of Saddleworth.**

Cllr Wall highlighted the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy framework and its implications for green belt, brownfield and grey belt sites across the Parish and suggested we develop a greenbelt audit of Saddleworth and invite the public to contribute. This was discussed. It was agreed that Cllr Wall would write a paper to share at the October Council meeting. Proposed Cllr Wall, seconded Cllr Garner, carried.

**620. Items for the next agenda**

Community toilet scheme

Update on grouse shooting

Energy Survey – next steps

Support for voluntary litter-picking by residents

Green Belt audit of Saddleworth

Standing orders/terms of reference - discussion

**Next meeting: Monday 20th January 2025 at 18.00 hrs**